



* The Descendants of Aleppo Jews in Jerusalem

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תמונות הכתבה מאוסף
הגב' בטי קרידי (גנדי)

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One way to get a handle on the changes which have taken place in Jerusalem and Israel between 1960 and 1995 is to study what has occurred in a microcosm. While such a study only reveals one piece of a larger mosaic, when we put all the parts together we can gain new insights into the whole.

In 1961-62, I did a study of Syrian Jews in Jerusalem, concentrating on about ten extended families, as well as a number of communal organizations.¹ Most of these families lived in the neighbourhoods surrounding Mahaneh Yehuda, including the Nahala'ot, Romema, and Geula. Most were of Aleppean origin and several were rabbinic families, related to a number of old rabbinic dynasties. Several of these families had been in Jerusalem since the 1890s. Others were families which had originated in the South-Central Turkish hinterland of Aleppo and were of proletarian origin, having immigrated to Aleppo after the First World War and to Palestine in the 1930s and 1940s. Jews from this region were often referred to as *Halebim* (Aleppeans; halebi, singular). A few had arrived after the establishment of the State.

In 1992 and 1993, I interviewed members of some of these families. I also investigated the condition of a number of Syrian Jewish institutions which I had studied previously or which had been established in more recent years. Here I will compare the findings of my 1962 work with that of my 1993 study and place both into a larger framework. Certain trends, such as the dispersal of origin-group members into the larger Israeli-Jewish society, have continued, while other trends such as movement to certain new neighbourhoods and the strengthening of the Orthodox institutions, are the result of larger changes in Israel.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF SYRIAN JEWS

Like the Turkish and Bulgarian Sephardim and the old-line Sephardim,² the Syrian Jews represent one of the smaller origin-groups in Israel. These groups generally entered Israeli society without causing massive social problems. In fact, some were part of the Sephardic community which was part of the 'Old Yishuv'. They were generally too small to

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